

narrative context. The good Samaritan parable is introduced in a dialogue between Jesus and a lawyer (adapted from Mark 12:28-34) on loving one's neighbor. Jesus then explains that the notion of one's neighbor crosses religious and social boundaries, just as a Samaritan aids a battered Jew, in spite of enmity between their two ethnic groups. The prodigal son parable is one of three which Jesus gives in response to criticisms that he associates with sinners. The parable's message is one of forgiveness. The father (representing God) forgives the younger son (representing non-Jews) who squanders his inheritance, while the dutiful older brother (representing Jews) protests.

Jesus' teachings are substantially different in the book of John. Unlike the synoptic gospels, in which Jesus speaks in short, crisp sayings and parables, in John Jesus speaks in extended discourses. The subject of eternal life is emphasized, and not the kingdom of God. Jesus refers to himself as the son of God, is the subject of his own teachings, and says little about the poor.

THE EARLY CHURCH

After his execution, strong leaders and apostles emerged within the Jesus movement, keeping its spirit alive and recruiting even more followers. Jesus was quickly seen as the crucified and risen messiah who would return from heaven at any moment and begin an apocalyptic (as opposed to military) reign. Old testament messianic prophecies were applied to him, bolstering the interpretation that Jesus was the Christ. The book the Acts of the Apostles, written about 85 CE, chronicles the events of the early Church after Jesus' resurrection. The book is sometimes termed the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, since the author depicts the expansion of the early church as being guided by the Holy Spirit. The Book of Acts is a continuation of Luke, penned by the same author, and discusses the spread of early Christianity immediately after Jesus. The opening of Acts recounts Jesus' Ascension into heaven and the arrival of the holy spirit a few days later, during the Jewish agricultural festival of Pentecost. The believers are directly affected by the presence of the holy spirit, as evidenced by their speaking in foreign tongues. Peter emerges as the leader of the Church, and thousands of believers are baptized. Early interpretations of Jesus and his message varied greatly among the new followers. Some

followers sold their possessions and waited his arrival. Of particular concern is the relationship of Christianity to Judaism in view of the large numbers of non-Jewish converts. More than half of Acts chronicles the conversion and missionary journeys of Paul.

After a dramatic conversion experience and a period of indoctrination, Paul, a former Pharisee who previously persecuted the Jews, soon rose in the leadership to the status of an Apostle. During three missionary journeys in non-Jewish territories throughout the Mediterranean region, he established dozens of churches and corresponded with many of them. 14 books of the New Testament are letters ascribed to Paul. However, only seven are confidently traced to him (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). His letters, composed between 50-60 CE, contain encouragement and instructions to the churches he helped establish, but they did not gain a wide readership until the end of the first century. Written about 55 CE, Paul's letter to the church of Galatia is a pivotal text in the development of early Christianity, and is the earliest written discussion of first century church politics. Shortly after his visit, church members in Galatia were persuaded by Christian Judaizers

that adherence to Jewish law was a prerequisite for becoming a Christian. Thus, Christians were still bound by traditional Jewish laws, such as circumcision and food rituals. Paul argues vehemently that obedience to Jewish law will not absolve our sins. Justification/righteousness comes about only through faith in Christ, and this is open to Jews and non-Jews alike. The larger issue in the debate was whether Christianity was merely the messianic fulfillment of Judaism, and thus a Jewish sect, or a distinct religion. Paul describes his efforts to set Christianity apart from its Jewish framework. An immediate theological difficulty faced by Paul was the question of how Jesus could be divine despite his criminal execution. Paul's solution was to see Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent resurrection as the end of the old Jewish law and the beginning of a new era of divine grace. Through baptism, Christians symbolically participate in the cross by dying to their old lives and re-emerging anew. The crucifixion and resurrection are so central to Paul's teaching that they are the only features of the life of Jesus with which he is concerned. In Paul's first letter to the church of Corinth, written about 55 CE, life after death is also linked to the resurrection: because Christ resurrected, we are assured that we too will be. Unlike Greek writers, who construe life after

death as the continuation of a bodiless, immortal soul, Christian doctrine holds to the bodily resurrection of the dead as found in post-exilic Jewish writings. Paul teaches that our new bodies will be heavenly and imperishable in nature, rather than earthly and perishable, and that all those who belong to Christ will be simultaneously resurrected when he returns.

EARLY CHURCH DOCTRINE.

The doctrine of the Trinity, central to Christianity, holds that God is a unity of three persons: the father, son, and holy spirit. Although the term "Trinity" and its technical meaning were developed by early Church fathers, passages that associate the father, son, and holy spirit are the scriptural basis of the doctrine. The following is particularly important in this regard. The holy spirit is only briefly mentioned at the end of this passage. In the Old Testament occasional references are made to a spirit of God, but John and other New Testament writers expand on this notion and see the holy spirit both as a divine presence and as an agent of guidance for the church. In Christian doctrine, a sacrament is a visible religious rite that confers special grace. The number of sacraments has varied throughout Christian history; twelfth-century theologian Hugo of St. Victor listed 30. Baptism and the Eucharist have always been the most important.

The term Apostolic Fathers was coined in the 17th century in reference to a collection of writings attributed to followers of the original apostles. The 14 texts now included under this label were not only popular in the early church, but some were included in scripture lists by early church fathers. Of particular interest in

this collection is the Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve, which gives instructions on baptism, fasting, prayer, and the Eucharist. Discovered in 1873, the Didache is a manual of early church doctrine from the Syrian church of Antioch. Eusibius, a fourth century Bishop, notes the high value placed on the Didache by early churches. Although the original date of the work is disputed, scholars believe that some parts are of first-century origin and contemporaneous with the gospels. The brief work can be divided into four parts. The opening lists a series of moral injunctions culled from various parts of the Bible. Instructions concerning food, baptism, fasting, and prayer ritual follow. Next, instructions are given on receiving new prophets, apostles, and Christians. Finally, a warning is given concerning the return of Jesus.

The expression New Testament Apocrypha is applied loosely to a range of early Christian texts, mostly from the second century, that are not included in the New Testament. Many of these were considered sacred by early churches and are the source of Christian beliefs, such as the assumption of Mary. Frequently they aim to fill gaps in the chronologies of Jesus' life and the early church. Paralleling the genres of New Testament texts, the writings fall into the categories of gospels, acts, epistles, and

apocalypses. They are of particular value as a possible source of stray sayings of Jesus which continued to circulate into the second century.

Early Christians were interested in accounts of Jesus' childhood which filled the gaps in the four gospel narratives. Many childhood gospels circulated, but most of the information in these derive from two texts written about 150 CE: the Infancy Gospel of James, and the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. The Infancy Gospel of James, also called the Protoevangelium, or first gospel, is pseudonomously ascribed to James, the brother of Jesus, and scholars believe that its author was a non-Jewish Christian from outside of Palestine. The text presents the oldest account of the early life of Mary, including her espousal to Joseph, and describes the virgin birth of Jesus. The tradition of Mary's life-long virginity runs counter to statements in the gospels referring to Jesus' brothers. The Infancy Gospel of James reconciles these two traditions by presenting Joseph as a widower with children from his previous marriage. The feast of Mary's presentation in the temple (November 21) in Catholic and Orthodox traditions is based on events in the selection below. Written about 150 CE, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas was among the most popular apocryphal writings in the early church. The text deals with Jesus'

childhood up to his twelfth year. The youthful Jesus is presented as having deadly divine powers, which he angrily uses to get his way. As he grows, though, his sense of moral responsibility progressively develops, and he uses his powers to heal rather than harm. The story provides an interesting commentary on the divine and human natures of Jesus: his power and knowledge are fully divine, but his conscience and emotions are human and require maturing. The text is reconstructed from several surviving manuscripts which vary greatly; some scholars believe that the original included sayings, although only the story lines are preserved.

GNOSTICISM.

The Christian tradition we inherit was defined in reaction to and in competition with early alternatives. The New Testament canon and early church hierarchy are products of the winning tradition, whereas the losing traditions were branded as heresies along the way. One unsuccessful early interpretation of Christianity was offered by Gnosticism, a diverse religious movement which flourished throughout the Near East from 100-400 CE. The aim of the Gnostic religion in general was to free one's spirit from the illusions of the evil, material world and re-ascend to heaven. Release was to be accomplished by acquiring special knowledge (gnosis). In Christian Gnosticism, the material world was created by an evil demigod, and Jesus' teachings provide the knowledge that redeems us from worldly illusion. Church leaders reacted vehemently to the Gnostic interpretation, penning many polemics against it.

The study of early Christianity was redefined with the 1945 discovery of Gnostic texts in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. The 45 texts are fourth and fifth century Coptic translations of Greek manuscripts, although the originals go back much earlier. Representing both Christian and non-Christian Gnostic ideas, they are thought to be the library of an early Gnostic Christian

monastery which buried the documents in containers for protection. The texts suggest that early Christianity was much more theologically diverse than initially believed, and that the lasting tradition was only one among several viable alternatives.

Many Gnostic texts contain feminine imagery typical of ancient mythology, which by 200 CE was removed from mainstream Christianity. Much of this imagery is cosmological, and it involves various layers of God's being and creative activity. Some Gnostic texts portray God as having both a male and female quality: God is the primal father and the mother of all things. Others describe God as radiating divine beings or personalities, one of which is the female spirit of wisdom, the womb of everything. Finally, and most interestingly, several texts depict the divine Trinity as the father, mother, and son. In addition to their feminine theological themes, Gnostic texts defend the role of women as teachers of divine knowledge. This is most evident in the Gospel of Mary (named after Mary Magdalene) where, after Mary presents some private teachings of Jesus, her authority is first challenged by Peter, and then defended by Levi.

The jewel in the crown of Gnostic texts of Nag Hammadi is the Gospel of Thomas, which

broadens our understanding of the historical Jesus. The text is a sayings gospel insofar as it contains no story line, and little dialogue. The 114 sayings are organized around particular catchwords, but do not systematically develop themes. Although the text was ultimately compiled in the second century, it may be based on an original core of short sayings written about 60 CE. These, in turn, come from orally transmitted accounts of Jesus' teachings. Thus, like Q, these may represent the earliest strata of sayings attributed to Jesus. The challenge for scholars is to identify that core from embellishments penned by later writers. A Gnostic component of the text suggests that these are secret teachings of Jesus, knowledge of which will free one's spirit from the material world. Many of the sayings parallel those found in the four canonical Gospels. Some of the parables in Thomas are more concise and thus, perhaps, earlier than their canonical counterparts (8, 9, 57, 63, 64, 65). A large group of sayings is unique to this text, although it probably did not originate with Jesus (15, 17, 18, 19). Most interesting, however, are two sayings that scholars believe originated with Jesus, but which are absent from the canonical gospels:

97. Jesus said, The [Father's] imperial rule is like a woman who was carrying a [jar]

full of meal. While she was walking along [a] distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her [along] the road. She didn't know it; she hadn't noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down and discovered that it was empty.

98. Jesus said, The Father's imperial rule is like a person who wanted to kill someone powerful. While still at home he drew his sword and thrust it into the wall to find out whether his hand would go in. Then he killed the powerful one.

CHURCH HIERARCHY

While theologians battled over doctrine, churches were established throughout the Roman Empire, and Bishops – reputedly successors of the original Apostles -- officiated in key regions. At first Roman rulers did not distinguish between Christians and Jews. But the rapid advance of Christianity soon made the distinction apparent, and, from their perspective, threatened the unity of the Empire. Christianity was outlawed and, throughout the first three centuries CE, several emperors systematically persecuted Christians, some bent on their extinction. A decisive turning point came when the Christian emperor Constantine took the throne, and in 313 CE he proclaimed complete religious liberty for Christians. He sponsored a world church council, at Nicea, which determined that Christ was not subordinate to God, but substantively identical with God.

The Nicene Creed was initially composed during the early church period and adopted in revised form at the Council at Nicea in 325 CE. It was further modified at the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE., although some scholars believe it took its penultimate form at the Council at Chalcedon in 451 CE. Today, the Nicene Creed remains the most popular

confession of faith in Catholic, Orthodox, and most Protestant liturgies, although Orthodox churches omit the filioque clause.

I believe in one God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the father and the son, who with the father and the son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one

baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The council also established the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria as the primary officiators of the Church; later the bishop of Constantinople was added to the list. In 392 CE Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity the only allowable religion throughout the empire.

Early Christian traditions typically traced their lineage back to an original follower of Jesus. Early Gnostics viewed Jesus' brothers, James and Thomas, as their founders. For Ethiopians, the founder is the eunuch of Acts 8. For the Orthodox of Constantinople, he is Andrew the Apostle. The catholic church, though, considers its foundation to be Peter, the first supreme Pope. The concept of the Petrine Papacy is based on two doctrines. First, the doctrine of apostolic succession maintains that the original apostles had authority over specific regional churches, which they passed on to their successors. Peter established the church of Rome and, at his death, authority was passed to Linus. Second, the doctrine of the primacy of Peter, forged in the third through fifth centuries, maintains that Peter was given supreme

authority over all church congregations. The argument for this latter claim is based on the following passage from Matthew. Drawing from a scene in Mark 8:27 in which Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, Matthew then recounts that Jesus rewarded Peter with keys to the kingdom of God. Although the language is metaphorical, Peter is clearly given sweeping authority, thus indicating Matthew's allegiance to the Petrine tradition.

FORMATION OF THE VULGATE.

The primary body of scriptures in the Christian tradition is the Bible, containing an Old and New Testament. The Old Testament is the Jewish Tanakh, which makes the Christian Bible unique among world scriptures by including the canon of a different religion. The Christian Old Testament was initially based on the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Jewish canon from 100 BCE. Accordingly, the Old Testament retains the book arrangement of the Septuagint. Catholic and Orthodox Christians also accept the apocryphal books from the Septuagint, although Protestants reject these, opting for what they believe are the older books as appear in the Jewish Tanakh. The term Old Testament was coined by Paul, who used it in reference to the writings of the Mosaic covenant (2 Cor. 3:14). The principal value of the Old Testament for Christianity is that Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of its covenants and messianic prophecies.

By the fourth century CE, the term New Testament was commonly used to refer to a collection of 27 early Christian texts composed in Greek. Traditionally they are thought to be written by the original Apostles who were Jesus' followers. Historically, though, all of the texts are now thought to be written by second and

third generation Christians from 50-150 CE. For the first few centuries, there was no fixed New Testament canon, and manuscripts of hundreds of individual Christian texts circulated independently among the early churches. Early church fathers made recommendations as to which of these were authoritative. The first known list containing the present 27 books appears as a side comment in St. Athanasias' Easter letter of 367 CE.

As Latin became the spoken language of the Roman Empire, Latin translations of the Old Testament and various Christian texts circulated. In 382 the Pope commissioned Jerome, a priest and scholar, to bring order to the chaotic collection of Latin

texts. Returning to Hebrew and Greek language texts, Jerome produced a new Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments, referred to as the Vulgate, which, after some resistance, was accepted as definitive. Even with a more fixed canon, early theologians questioned the authority of several Old and New Testament texts and introduced a distinction between protocanonical and deuterocanonical texts: canonical writings with either a primary or secondary status. In the 13th century the traditional chapter divisions were added to each

book of the Bible by a Cardinal who was preparing a Biblical index.

EASTERN ORTHODOXY.

During the 4th century CE, the vast Roman Empire became too difficult to manage from a single location, so it was regionally divided, with the western territory governed by Rome and the eastern territory governed by Constantinople. Now inseparably tied to empire politics, the Church too established parallel jurisdictions. The western jurisdiction, later designated catholic, was led by Rome's bishop, or Pope, and the eastern (or orthodox) jurisdiction, looked, less formally, to Constantinople's bishop, or Patriarch. Differences of worship and authority further divided the regions, such as the east's use of icons, rejection of Papal authority, and emphasis on Christ's divinity above his humanity. At the local Council of Toledo in 589 CE., the sentence "I believe in the Holy Ghost ... who proceeds from the father" was expanded to read "who proceeds from the father and the son (filioque)." The issue involves whether the Holy Ghost originated from the father alone, or both the father and the son. Known as the filioque clause, its inclusion provoked discord with the Eastern Orthodox churches, and became their rallying cry in the Great Schism of 1054. The filioque clause was definitively added to the creed by the Catholics at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. The rift was complete in 1054

when Rome's Pope Leo IX and Constantinople's Patriarch Michael Cerularius mutually excommunicated each other. Since the great catholic-orthodox schism, the three original eastern church jurisdictions (Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople) have multiplied to over 20, each with its own Patriarch. Although the Orthodox jurisdictions govern independently, they are unified by shared liturgy and doctrine.

From as early as the sixth century, the dominant form of mystical contemplation in Eastern Orthodoxy involved continuously repeating the Jesus prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." By the 13th century, recitation of the Jesus prayer was supplemented with techniques of regular breathing, and taking postures with one's chin placed on the chest, eyes fixed on the heart. The purpose of this technique, known as hesychasm (literally stillness), was to clear one's mind from all distraction and directly encounter God within one's heart. The heart was the focal point of the Jesus prayer since Hesychists believed it to be one's spiritual center. Hesychasm was violently attacked in the 14th century by those who maintained that direct encounter with God was impossible. Nevertheless, Hesychasm was too firmly grounded in monastic practice, and thus

was confirmed by Orthodox councils in 1341 and 1351. Eastern Orthodox mystics in particular view as sacred a collection of more than 30 mystical texts written between the fourth and fourteenth centuries and known as the Philokalia. The texts, part of the monastic libraries of Mt. Athos, Greece, were written by ascetic monks as guidebooks for other monks on successful ascetic living. First published in 1782, the collection went through several translations, and a greatly expanded five-volume Russian edition appeared between 1867-1890. Many of the texts are how-to guides for overcoming the bodily and mental distractions that Satan creates in order to deter mystics. Others explain various techniques for contemplation and direct encounter with God. The texts of the Philokalia were not only cherished by the medieval ascetics who followed their practices but, since their publication, also by lay orthodox mystics.

After the fall of the western Roman empire from barbarian invasions in the 5th century, missionary journeys spread Christianity throughout northern Europe. The Pope was on a par with emperors of new and primitive European states, and Christian monasteries were the default centers of learning. By the 15th century, growing discontentment with Catholic hierarchy erupted in the Protestant reformation.

MEDIEVAL MYSTICISM AND THEOLOGY.

Four mystical essays by an unknown 5th century author named Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite were greatly valued among mystics, especially the Mystical Theology which maintains that the highest knowledge of God is attained by way of negation. Acts 17:34 mentions an Athenian convert of Paul's named Dionysius, a member of Athens's high court, the Areopagus. Eusibius, fourth century church historian, reports that Dionysius became bishop of Athens, and was later martyred. An unknown author of four mystical essays pseudonymously ascribed them to Dionysius, thereby guaranteeing their notice by his contemporaries. The pious fraud was more than successful, and the essays were consulted by mystics and scholars for the next millennia. One of these, the brief Mystical Theology was perhaps the single most influential text in medieval Christian mysticism. Pseudo-Dionysius argues that to know God directly one must progress through a series of assertions about what God is, and then denials about what God is not. The Ladder of Divine Ascent by John Climacus (580-650), abbot of the monastery at Mount Sinai, describes thirty rungs stretching from earth to heaven, symbolizing transition to the contemplative life.

Catholicism has a long mystical tradition which produced hundreds of texts, only a few of which can be mentioned here. Prior to the 12th century, comments on mystical practices were scattered and informal. 12th century writers such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141), and William of St. Thierry (d. 1148) systematized mystical doctrine and established key elements for later mystics. Foremost was the interiorized experience, affective piety, and patterns of "contemplation" (the term they used for what we now call "mysticism"). The German women's movement of the next century produced several mystics, including Hildegard of Bingen, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Elizabeth of Schonau. 14th century mystics include Julian of Norwich (1342-1413), a Benedictine nun who lived isolated in a small cell, and Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), a German Dominican monk, whose more pantheistic writings were pronounced heretical after papal investigation. The greatest work of 15th century mysticism is the Imitation of Christ, attributed to Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471), and that of the 16th century is The Interior Castle by Spanish Carmelite nun Teresa of Avila (1515-1582).

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), 16th century Spanish mystic, entered a Carmelite convent at

age 19. With St. John of the Cross she established the Discalced (barefoot) order which was more strict and wore only sandals. She had visions and raptures and, in her most memorable vision, an angel pierced her heart with a flaming arrow, which when removed left her with a love for God. Teresa's most systematic work the Interior Castle (1577), uses the metaphor of seven series of mansions to represent various stages of spiritual development. The mystic enters the castle door through prayer, and then roams the mansions' millions of rooms at will. She describes the fifth series of mansions as the Prayer of Union by which the mystic's soul is possessed by God. In the selection below, she explains the effects of this union using the analogy of a silkworm. The silkworm starts from a tiny egg which feeds on mulberry leaves, spins a cocoon, and emerges as a butterfly. The silkworm represents the soul, its nourishment is the Church, the silk house is Christ, and the spinning of the cocoon is the prayer of union. Thus, the union experience, which does not last even a half hour, transforms the mystic, and the new "butterfly" feels like a stranger in its new world.

REFORMATION

The Protestant Reformation was born on October 31, 1517 when German priest Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed a revolutionary document to the door of Wittenberg Castle. The situation was ripe in the surrounding German states to revolt in mass against both the religious and political domination of the Catholic church. Several factors in the centuries preceding the reformation contributed to its realization. Early less successful attempts at reform by John Wycliffe (d. 1384) and John Hus (d. 1415) provided a starting point for voicing discontent. Renaissance mystics such as Meister Eckhardt (d. 1327) and Thomas a Kempis (d. 1471) reacted against the dogmas of rationalistic scholastic theology and offered a more inward and personalized approach to religious truth. Renaissance humanism challenged the ill-gotten power of Church leaders, ridiculed superstitious religious practices, and emphasized the spiritual significance behind religious rituals. Finally, Papal interference in European politics set Germany's political leaders against the entire institution of Catholicism.

As a young man Luther intended to go into law, but after a frightening experience during a thunderstorm he became an Augustinian monk. Luther had inward struggles about religious

hypocrisy and what was necessary to become righteous. In time he became professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, in Saxony, where he had a conversion experience in the tower room of the Augustinian Friary. Studying Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith" Luther was persuaded that God's forgiveness comes through faith alone. Luther was also bothered by the sale of indulgences, which was on the raise to pay for the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica. He was particularly offended at Johann Tetzel, an indulgence peddler who came to the borders of Saxony. Local churches competed by offering similar opportunities for remitting divine punishment. Wittenberg Castle Church itself contained 18,000 relics, collected by Frederic of Saxony, which, viewed for a fee, could take off up to 2,000,000 years in purgatory. Included among the relics were a baby slain by Herod, a twig from Moses' burning bush, pieces of Mary's girdle, feathers dropped by angels, and a tear shed by Jesus. In protest to all these practices, Luther nailed a document containing 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle (which functioned as a public bulletin board). Among the propositions, Luther maintained that God gives full remission of punishment and guilt to all who ask; indulgences are fraudulent, and foster deceit, immorality, skepticism and

irreverence; if the Pope cared for people, he would empty purgatory out of love, not for money. Luther was excommunicated by the Pope, but he quickly became a folk hero. To gain support for his proposed reforms, he published his "Appeal to the German Nobility" (1520) which urged the nobility to correct the abuses of the Church.

John Calvin (1509-1564) was a French born theologian and early Protestant reformer. He was raised Catholic, studied theology and law in Paris, and in his early years followed the intellectual path of Renaissance humanism. By 1534 Calvin allied himself with the reformation movement and quickly became influential among French reformers. For safety, he left Paris, and eventually moved to Geneva, Switzerland where, after a shaky start, he established a strict, almost theocratic local government. One of his laws, for example, prohibited any labor on Sunday -- including stoking one's fireplace in winter. He soon became the leader of the reformation in Switzerland (Presbyterianism) and France (Hugenotism). Calvin authored several theological works, the most important of which is *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. First published in 1536, the Institutes went through several revisions and by the final edition of 1559

was four times the original length. Fifty years after Calvin's death, followers of Calvin presented his theology in five points, known as the "five points of Calvinism." They are, (1) total depravity: humanity's complete nature is innately corrupted; (2) unconditional election: God predestines some to salvation; (3) limited atonement: salvation is restricted to those elected; (4) irresistible grace: the elect must accept God's favor; (5) perseverance of the saints: God sustains the elect in spite of their weakness.

The Vulgate continued to be the official text of the Bible until the Protestant Reformation, when several modern language translations appeared, many of which removed the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, or at least relegated them to an appendix. Verse divisions were also added at this time.

As surrounding European countries soon followed the reformer's lead, Luther believed that the protesters would remain theologically unified because God would guide each person toward the same interpretation of the Bible. This was not to be, and five centuries later, hundreds of Protestant denominations have emerged from disputes over doctrine. The largest Protestant denominations are the Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists,

and Episcopalians. The large denominations are often doctrinally divided among themselves; the more conservative emphasize evangelism and Biblical inerrancy, whereas the more liberal stress social concerns and metaphorical interpretations of the Bible. Pentecostal churches are part of a movement, rather than a single denomination, and stress spiritual gifts, such as prophecy and speaking in tongues.

CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS.

Keeping with the religious freedom and pioneering spirit of 19th century America, various Christian movements produced sacred texts. The distinct beliefs of the Church of Latter-Day Saints are founded on the *Book of Mormon*, a text produced by founder Joseph Smith (1805-1844). Mormons believe that Smith translated the text from gold plates buried during a previous age, the location of which was revealed to Smith in an angelic vision. Smith also translated a lost text of Abraham, made a series of prophecies, and was supposedly divinely inspired with a new version of the Bible. These are included in the church's two other sacred writings: the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*. The *Book of Mormon*, published in 1830, chronicles the history and religious practices of a band of Israelites who migrated to America in 600 BCE. Under two leaders, two distinct conflicting cultures emerged: the civilized Nephites, and the nomadic and warring Lamanites. Ostensibly the forefathers of the native Americans, the Lamanites exterminated the Nephites. Anticipating their demise, Moroni, a Nephite Chronicler, buried a golden copy of the *Book of Mormon* to preserve their story. A 20 page section of the Book of Mormon describes how

Jesus visited the Nephites and gave them Christian Doctrine, much of which is paraphrased from the Gospels. Selections from this are below.

The Christian Science movement reveres *Science and Health* (1875) by founder Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), which emphasizes the healing aspect of Christianity. According to Eddy, the material world and all illness associated with it are unreal and illusory. Healing comes after prayer when God simply removes the afflicted person's false belief in the illusion. Associated with the New Age movement, American pastor Levi H. Dowling (1844-1911) produced the *Aquarian Gospel* in 1907 via automatic typewriting, which recounts 18 lost years of Jesus as he traveled to India, Tibet, Egypt, Persia, and Greece.

As scholars today discover older manuscript copies of Biblical books, passages are revised or deleted to reflect the earliest sources. For example, the well known story from John 9 of the stoning of the adulterous woman ("Let him who is without sin cast the first stone") is now removed from modern editions of the Bible.

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ISLAM

Islam's basic tenets are expressed in its most holy creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger." *Islam* means surrender, and adherents to the religion are called *Muslims*, meaning those who surrender. staunchly monotheistic, Islam sees Allah as the omnipotent creator God who, through a series of prophets, has called people to obedience. At the end of time, Allah will resurrect the dead, condemn the wicked to hell, and entrust believers to eternal peace in his garden. Following prophets such as Moses and Jesus, Muhammad is the final and greatest prophet, who delivered the definitive expression of Allah's voice in the Qur'an, Islam's most holy book. Drawing on Jewish narratives, Muslims trace their religious heritage from Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, and finally, to Ishmael, Abraham's first son. Muslim faith is embodied not only in religious practice, but in a social order governed by Islamic law.

TIME OF INGRATITUDE

The cradle of Islam was the Arabian Peninsula, during a period which Muslims contemptuously refer to as the *time of ingratitude*(*al-jahiliyyah*), that is, ingratitude towards God. Economically, desert conditions of the peninsula disallowed for wide-spread agriculture, so inhabitants depended on trade with the surrounding empires. When the Arabs later lost their spice monopoly, trading cities such as Petra died. As a convenient stopping place on well-traveled trade routes, though, Mecca survived as the prosperous center of trading in the Arab world. Politically, Mecca was plagued by warring factions involving their two main tribes, the Quraysh and the Khuza'a, each with divisive clans.

Religiously, inhabitants believed in a range of spiritual forces and deities. Belief in polydemonism prevailed, involving supernatural *jinn*, sprites, and demons, some good and others evil, which inhabited special objects or locations. Tapping into their ancient Semitic heritage, they set up shrines to various nature gods and goddesses. Hubal, god of the moon, was the principal deity of the Meccans, and before his idol people would cast lots and divining arrows. Three chief goddesses of Mecca, Al-Lat, Al-Manat, and Al-Uzza, were

worshipped. There was widespread belief in a creator deity, named Allah, who was high god of the regional pantheon. Sacred shrines with carved and uncarved stones were thought to be the dwelling places of these spirits and deities, and they became the focus of offerings and prayers. There was also a significant Jewish and Christian monotheistic presence. Large numbers of diaspora Jews, fleeing enemies for over a thousand years, settled in Arabia's desert. The Jews interacted well with their new neighbors, and many Arabs converted to Judaism. Hermit Christian monks settled in the desert regions, along with heretical Christian sects escaping the authority of the Roman Church. Muslim tradition also note the presence of pre-Islamic monotheists, known as *Hanif*, who carried the torch of Abraham's religion through the time if ingratitude.

Festivals and pilgrimages dominated the religious activities of the Meccans. Annual festivals lasting weeks drew inhabitants from throughout the peninsula to the two cities of Mina and Ukaz. With its 365 shrines, one for each day of the year, Mecca was a constant attraction to pilgrims. Meccan religious activity centered on the Ka'bah, an austere cubical structure housing idols, murals of the gods, and the Black Stone. The stone, believed to have

fallen from heaven, was the object of a special ritual in which naked pilgrims would circle it seven times and then kiss it. Muslim tradition maintains that the Ka'bah was originally built by Abraham.

EARLY YEARS OF MUHAMMAD.

Even a brief survey of world religions indicates that the lives of the religious founders are shrouded in legend, often to the point that their historical lives can no longer be recovered. Although many accounts of Muhammad are also legendary, Islam has the advantage of early written sources, not just by early Muslims, but by Muhammad himself.

Born about 570 CE, Muhammad was from the Hashimite family clan of Mecca, part of the Quraysh tribe. The clan's founder, from whom Muhammad descended, traced his lineage back to Ishmael, Abraham's first son according to Jewish legend. Muhammad's birth name is unknown, although his honorific title, *Muhammad*, means "highly praised." Tragedy marked his infant and childhood years. His father died before he was born, and as a minor under pre-Islamic law he was unable to acquire inheritance. He was entrusted to his grandfather who, according to one tradition, had him raised by a Bedouin foster mother. His natural mother died when he was six, and his grandfather two years later. Under the care of his uncle, he became involved with caravans. A story relates that the 12 year old Muhammad accompanied his uncle to Syria on a caravan, where he met a Christian monk who recognized

him as the future great prophet. Because of his reputation for honesty, Muhammad was soon entrusted with the leadership of caravans. A pivotal moment in his life arrived when, at 25, he led a caravan for a wealthy widow named Khadija. Although she was 15 years his senior, the two married, and for years she became an important source of encouragement for Muhammad. She bore him four daughters and three sons who died in infancy. Fatima, the most well known daughter, later married his cousin Ali.

According to his tribal custom, during one month of every year Muhammad retreated for religious reflection. He reflected on the good fortune given him by Allah, in view of his family and successful caravan career. He also thought about Jews and Christians who had a *book*, the Bible, by virtue of which they were prospering more than his own people. This moved him towards monotheism. Islam was born on the *Night of Power* (Laylat al-Qadr) when, on retreat in a cave outside of Mecca, the forty-year old Muhammad had a life-changing vision. In a voice like reverberating bells, the angel Gabriel approached him, commanding him to recite a phrase: "And the Lord is most Generous, who by the pen has taught mankind things they knew not." He went through a period of doubt for a

few months, even contemplating suicide, fearing he was an ecstatic visionary, an occupation not held in high esteem in his society. He also considered that he might be mad, or that he had heard the voice of a *jinn*. Eventually his doubts dispersed and his wife became his first convert, believing that he was a prophet. Muhammad's first revelation occurred on the Night of Power and is recorded in surah 96 of the koran.

Recite in the name of your Lord who created -- created man from clots of blood

Recite! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One, who by the pen taught man what he did not know.

Indeed, man transgresses in thinking himself his own master: for to your Lord all things return.

Observe the man who rebukes Our servant when he prays.

Think: does he follow the right guidance or enjoin true piety?

Think: if he denies the Truth and gives no heed, does he not know that God observes all things?

No. Let him desist, or We will drag him by the forelock, his lying, sinful forelock.

Then let him call his helpmates. We, in Our turn, will call the guards of Hell.

No, never obey him! Prostrate yourself and come nearer.

Visions and revelations of this kind continued throughout his life. They were recorded or memorized by others as they occurred, and then compiled into the text of the Qur'an. The moments of revelation began with Muhammad becoming entranced while shaking and sweating. Then, in rhymed prose, rhapsodies in Arabic flowed from his mouth. During his early prophetic career, the main points of his message were that Allah is the only God, that the dead will resurrect, and that Allah will judge all. Idolaters forfeit paradise and are blind to the powers of the creator. The opening surah of the Qur'an is the most commonly repeated prayer in Islam and an integral part of worship. Scholars give it an early date from about the fourth year of Muhammad's Meccan mission

Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe,

The compassionate, the Merciful,

Sovereign of the Day of Judgment!

You alone we worship, and to You alone we turn for help.

Guide us to the straight path,

The path of those whom You have favored,

Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,

Nor of those who have gone astray.

[surah 1]

After his wife, his next converts included his cousin Ali and a merchant named Abu Bakr, both of whom assumed leadership positions after Muhammad's death. As his following grew, the first Muslims experienced verbal attacks, threats, and later physical violence. The opposition was in part economically motivated by those whose livelihoods depended on religious pilgrimages to the Ka'bah; Muhammad's message of a single God, they assumed, threatened this. Many Meccan merchants assumed that a single god would draw fewer pilgrims than the many idols housed in their city.

For protection, Muhammad first sent a band of his followers to Ethiopia, where they were warmly received by local Christians. He and about 50 followers were then placed under siege in their Meccan neighborhood in an attempt to starve them into submission. Under pressure, Muhammad strangely reported a new revelation: along with Allah, the three key Meccan goddesses were acknowledged. The siege was then lifted, and the exiles returned from

Ethiopia. Later Muhammad announced that the new revelation was inspired by the devil, and the relevant passages were removed from his record of revelations. Hostility increased when his wife and uncle died. He tried to establish himself in an oasis town named Taif, about 60 miles southeast of Mecca, but failed.

LATER YEARS OF MUHAMMAD.

The turning point in Muhammad's mission occurred during a pilgrimage festival. He met residents of the northern city Yathrib who suggested that their people would be more receptive to him, in part because the city had many Jews who were awaiting the arrival of a prophet. The city was in political turmoil, and the residents believed that they could benefit from Muhammad's administrative skills. A period of negotiations followed. It was agreed that Muhammad would be the final arbiter of all disputes and that the various religious groups, including the Jews and Muslims, would be autonomous. The migration to Yathrib, called the *hijrah* (flight) began with around 100 of his follower's families. In 622 CE, at age 52, Muhammad joined them, fleeing Meccan authorities as he made the journey. This migration is so momentous for Islam that it marks the starting point of the Muslim calendar.

Muhammad quickly became a successful administrator and statesman, an accomplishment with which even his enemies agreed. He renamed the city *Medina*, city of the prophet. Living unpretentiously in a clay house and milking goats, he was ever available for consultation. He punished the guilty, but was merciful toward his personal enemies. Of his

several diplomatic marriages, his primary wife, A'isha, daughter of Abu Bakr, had particular influence over him, and is the source of many of the traditions later ascribed to him.

Although successful in Medina, hostilities with Mecca continued. Believing that he had a responsibility to provide for the Meccan emigrant followers living in Medina, Muhammad intercepted a caravan to Mecca for its booty. Attempting this a second time, his band of 300 encountered an army of 1,000 Meccans at a site called Badr. The ensuing battle was a victory for Muhammad. Not dissuaded, a few years later the Meccans launched a military offensive against Muhammad's army. Known as the Battle of Uhud, the Muslims were badly outnumbered, forced to retreat, and Muhammad himself was slightly wounded. Even so, the battle was a moral victory since the Meccans failed to eradicate Muhammad. Two years later the Meccans attacked Medina directly with a confederate army of surrounding cities and nomads. By recommendation of a Persian soldier in his camp, Muhammad ordered a trench dug around the entire city, a strategy which resulted in victory.

With each military victory (and moral victories like Uhud), his converts increased, and his

control over Medina became more firm. The Jewish population, which attracted him to the city, ironically failed to accept him as God's prophet. Some even aided the Meccans in their attack. Now with increased authority, Muhammad drove them out. His disappointment with the Jews had theological consequences as well. The Jewish and Christian elements of his religion were suppressed, and the traditional Arab elements were emphasized. No longer would Muslims pray facing Jerusalem, but towards Mecca. Qur'anic passages of this period enjoined Muslims to make pilgrimages to Mecca, which included circumambulation of the Ka'bah and kissing its black stone. Friday became the official day of rest, not Saturday or Sunday. During his rule in Medina, other central Muslim doctrines were established, such as fasting, alms giving, and ritual prayer. Social laws involving marriage, divorce, inheritance, and treatment of slaves and prisoners were also formalized.

In the fifth year of the migration, Muhammad and his followers approached Mecca with the intention of making a pilgrimage, but were met with resistance from the city leaders. The two sides reached a face-saving compromise, in which Muhammad and his followers withdrew, with the understanding that the next year they

would return and the city would be open to them for a pilgrimage. However, in the intervening year a Meccan broke the truce, and Muhammad responded by marching on the city. Realizing that they were unable to resist his force, the leaders of the city surrendered and bloodshed was avoided. Riding into the Ka'bah on his camel, with his own hands he smashed its 360 idols, declaring, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished." Thus, he reclaimed the shrine for God and announced a declaration of immunity: Muslims would no longer be bound by obligations to idolatrous tribes which repeatedly broke agreements with Muslims. Idolaters would also be barred from the Ka'bah.. All of Mecca converted, giving no resistance. The territory around the Ka'bah was declared sacred (*haram*), and non-Muslims were prohibited from entering the area. Muhammad then returned to Medina.

In the tenth year after his migration, he made a final announcement at the Ka'bah: "Today I have completed my religion for you and I have fulfilled the extent of my favor towards you. It is my will that Islam be your religion. I have completed my mission. I have left you the Book of Allah and clear commandments. If you keep them you will never go wrong." Shortly thereafter, reporting severe headaches, he died

while in A'isha's house and was buried on that spot. The Hadith narratives surrounding his death describe his companions' concern about a possible successor to Muhammad and their fear that Muhammad might become an object of worship. The following account of Muhammad's death, attributed to A'isha, maintains that Muhammad appointed no successor.

THE QUR'AN.

The Qur'an is the collected revelations of Muhammad written during the last 23 years of his life. It is the primary sacred text for all sects of Islam. The text is divided into 114 sections called *surahs*, in lengths varying from three verses to almost 300 verses. The term "Qur'an" means "to recite," in the sense that Muhammad is verbally delivering Allah's message to the people. The traditional arrangement of the *surahs* is neither chronological nor topical, but according to length, beginning with the longest and ending with the shortest. *Surah* titles are derived from a prominent or recurring word, such as Cow, Abraham, Mary, Angels, Muhammad, Divorce, Infidels. Every *surah* (save one) begins with the phrase, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate", which was probably the original indicator of the *surah* divisions.

The exact chronology of the *surahs* was forgotten even during Muhammad's life, and many short revelations from different periods were joined together to form longer *surahs*. Modern scholars have offered several chronological schemes for organizing the *surahs*, although traditional Muslims believe that such attempts compromise the inherent beauty of the non-historical arrangement. Nevertheless,

each *surah* is associated with either the Meccan or Medinan periods of Muhammad's life. The Meccan *surahs* are the earliest and reflect Muhammad's struggle to persuade his skeptical Meccan listeners to abandon polytheism and idolatry. They are shorter and more poetic than the Medinan sections, and they are characterized by vivid imagery. Meccan *surahs* describe the world's cataclysmic end and emphasize Allah's omnipotence and active role in history, such as the following:

I swear by the declining day that perdition shall be the lot of man, except for those who have faith and do good works; who exhort each other to justice and to fortitude. [103: The Declining Day]

Within the Meccan period itself the style and content of the *surahs* developed. The earliest use short sentences, particularly powerful imagery and are the most lyrical. The later ones, by contrast, are longer, more direct and sermonizing, and less heated. Stories of the early prophets become more developed. When Muhammad and his followers migrated to Medina, political circumstances were

considerably more favorable, and the *surahs* reflect the confident voice of a lawgiver concerned with social and political issues. These are the longest *surahs* in the Qur'an, and deal with the giving of the law.

Muslims believe that the literary quality of the Qur'an itself validates Muhammad's claims of prophethood. For, although illiterate, he produced a literary work of great merit. Stylistically, most of the Qur'an is written in first, second, and third person, with Allah addressing believers, unbelievers, or Muhammad. The first person is used when God describes his divine attributes, and the second when describing actions in which humans participate. Passages not in the voice of Allah are prefaced by the word "say," indicating that they are to be recited by believers. Most of the Qur'an is written in rhymed prose, as opposed to poetry with meter. The latter approach was typical of poets who were thought to be guided by *jinn*, an association which Muhammad strongly resisted. Phrases are repetitive and well-suited for reciting; indeed, several traditional Qur'anic division schemes break the text into sections for daily reading. The memorization and recitation of Qur'anic verses was an expected form of piety for Muslims during Muhammad's life and Muhammad

himself ritually recited its passages. Special reciters memorized the Qur'an's entirety and recited it daily. At least one function of recitation was to preserve its content, as illustrated in the following Hadith passage: "The Prophet heard a reciter reciting the Qur'an in the mosque at night. The Prophet said, May Allah bestow his mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such verses of such-and-such Surahs, which I missed!" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6:562). Recitation was also a daily ritual for lay people: "The Prophet said, 'if one recites the last two verses of Surah-al-Baqara at night, it is sufficient for him (for that night)'" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 6:560). In Qur'anic recitation, not only were the words memorized, but the tonal song-like vocalizations as well.

The initial compilation of the Qur'an is a remarkable story. After each of Muhammad's revelations, efforts were made to record their content, either through writing or memorization by specially assigned reciters. Although Muhammad may have done some editing of the earlier *surahs* when in Medina, no definitive "book" existed at the time of his death. A year after Muhammad's death, many of the original reciters were killed in battle. Fearing that the Qur'an's contents would be lost through time, the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, ordered the

compilation of the first complete text of the Qur'an. The task was assigned to Zayd ibn Thabit, an aide of Muhammad, who pieced the text together from oral and written sources in Medina. In spite of the existence of Abu Bakr's single written compilation of the Qur'an, the Qur'an was still principally transmitted through memorized accounts and scattered written verses. Variant Qur'an fragments continued to circulate for 24 more years, until the third Caliph, Uthman, ordered the creation of a definitive text. Again Zayd supervised the compilation. He gathered all existing manuscript fragments and met with the original reciters accompanying Muhammad who had the complete contents memorized. When the compilation was complete, all previous written versions were destroyed, assuring that only one version of the Qur'an would remain. Although variant editions appeared later, the definitive text of the Qur'an we have today is the work of Zayd. Diacritical marks were later introduced to fix proper vocalization for recitation.

The content of the Qur'an covers a variety of subjects. Many stories parallel accounts in the Old Testament, and some from the New Testament, especially those of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Jesus. It is unlikely that Muhammad had access to Arabic translations of

Jewish or Christian texts, but instead relied on oral traditions of the local Jewish and Christian populace. Other narratives are of Arabian origin. Large sections of the Qur'an provide legislation for the newly formed Muslim community in Medina.

For Muslims, the Qur'an records more than the words of Muhammad; it is Allah's eternal speech; the Torah and Bible are earlier and incomplete revelations of Allah. Most Muslims believe that the Qur'an is uncreated, existing from eternity, with an original engraved tablet of the Qur'an in heaven. This eternal Qur'an is written in the Arabic language, and so authentic copies of the Qur'an will also only be in Arabic. The first unofficial translation appeared in 1141 in Latin, which was loathed by Muslims for its disparaging renderings. The physical book itself is sacred, and copies of the Qur'an are touched only after ceremonial cleansing of the handler.

HADITH CANONS.

After the Qur'an, the second most authoritative group of texts in Islam are the *Hadith* canons. The term *Hadith* means talk or speech, and it refers to collected narratives reporting actions and sayings of Muhammad recounted by his companions. These monumental collections are the principal basis for interpreting the Qur'an and were used to develop early Islamic legal systems.

While Muhammad was alive, his companions took note of his life events and his sayings. Within the first hundred years after Muhammad's death, individual sayings were transmitted both orally and in written form from teachers of *Hadith* to their students. Within the second hundred years, booklets of *Hadith* appeared on single topics, and later on several topics. The number of *Hadith* grew to about three quarters of a million, most being duplicates with only slight variations as generated by the continually growing number of teachers and students of *Hadith*. Finally, they were systematically compiled in the 9th and 10th centuries into no less than twelve multi-volume collections.

Hadith sayings are in two parts. First is the story itself (*matn*), and second is a list of names

constituting the chain of sources which establish the story's authenticity (*isnad*). The stories themselves are of two types. The first, called sacred *Hadith* (*Hadith qudsi*), contain divine revelations similar to those in the Qur'an. The second, called noble *Hadith* (*Hadith sharif*), relate to Muhammad's personal life and nonprophetic utterances. For *Hadith* compilers, a story's authenticity rested on the integrity of each person mentioned in the chain of sources. A discipline emerged which critically scrutinized the lives of the transmitters. According to the norms of this field of study, even an otherwise authentic statement that bears a faulty chain of transmitters should be regarded as inauthentic. Muslims agree that many of the *Hadith* were invented in the early days of Islam to answer questions of law, support religious factions, or serve political needs in struggles for power. Thousands were rejected early on for this very reason. An early *Hadith* scholar was even executed for confessing he fabricated 4,000 sayings for financial gain. Critical *Hadith* scholarship is still in its infancy, however, and judgment regarding the extent of their authenticity must be postponed.

MUHAMMAD'S TEACHINGS

Muhammad met with resistance concerning the concept of the bodily resurrection of the dead. In the following, from two late Meccan surahs, he makes this doctrine more palpable by offering analogies to bodily resurrection, and also by illustrating Allah's power, which implies Allah's ability to resurrect even dead bodies.

The Qur'an states that every nation has its prophet (surah 13:7). Muhammad mentions about thirty prophets who preceded him, most of which are also mentioned in the Bible. The prophets typically spoke to unreceptive idolatrous people, and Allah subsequently destroyed the idolaters for their continued disbelief. The hillsides are scattered with the ruins of the idolater's cities as monuments to their recalcitrance. As Muhammad's own prophetic message was met with disbelief and hostility, he warned the Meccans of the consequences. During Muhammad's late Meccan period of revelation, detailed accounts of early prophets are prominent. Surah 11, titled Hud, recounts the stories of Noah, Hud, Salih, Abraham, Lot, Shu'aib, and Moses. Noah, Abraham, Lot, and Moses are from Jewish tradition. The Qur'an's account of these prophets differs from biblical accounts, explaining in surah 6:91 that the Jews

suppressed much of Moses' revelation and that Muhammad is revealing new information. Unique to Qur'anic tradition, Hud, Salih, and Shu'aib, are prophets sent by Allah to the Arabs.

Surah 17:1 of the Qur'an, written in the middle Meccan period, reads, "Glory be to him who made his servant go by night from the sacred temple [of Mecca] to the farther temple [of Jerusalem] whose surroundings we have blessed, that we might show him some of our signs." Referred to as the Night Journey, Muhammad was carried by Gabriel to the temple of Jerusalem (isra), and brought through the seven heavens to God (mi'raj). Although some Muslims interpret this as a vision, most see it as a literal journey. In commemoration of this event, a Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock stands on the place of Muhammad's ascent, the former site of the Jewish temple of Jerusalem. It is Islam's third most holy place, after Mecca and Medina. The story of the Night Journey from the Hadith is recounted here.

As Muhammad's revelations grew to a sizable collection within a few years, the Qur'an itself frequently became a subject of further revelation. A middle Meccan surah recounts, "We have divided the Qur'an into sections so that you may recite it to the people with deliberation. We have imparted it by gradual

revelation" (surah 17:106). Another states, "We have revealed the Qur'an in the Arabic tongue that you may understand its meaning. It is a transcript of the eternal book in our keeping, sublime, and full of wisdom" (surah 43:3-4). In a late Meccan surah, Muhammad's illiteracy is offered as proof that the Qur'an was divinely revealed (surah 29:48). The following from Jonah (surah 10), of the late Meccan period, discusses the fate of those who deny the divine authority of the Qur'an.

When Muhammad became the city administrator in Medina, the focus of his revelations soon shifted from being a lone defender of monotheism to his being a law giver. He present laws concerning drinking, gambling, orphans, divorce, weaning, widows, and dowries. In spite of contemporary criticism of the treatment of women in Muslim societies, Islam introduced women's rights where virtually none existed previously. Before Muhammad, women were essentially property, with no inheritance rights, and often buried alive in infancy. Marriage contracts were loose, and often temporary. Muhammad condemned infanticide and required that daughters be given a share of inheritance. In matters of marriage, adultery was denounced, women were allowed the right of consent for marriage, and divorce became

more difficult. Written about 626, the following selections from Women (surah 4) are laws pertaining to women and include some of these reforms.

According to the Qur'an, certain groups of people had received revealed scriptures prior to Muhammad. These "people of the book" include the Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Sabians. The Qur'an acknowledges the legitimacy of these religions, maintaining a place for such believers in the afterlife. However, many people of the book have abandoned their revealed teachings by adopting false gods and denying God's true prophets. The following selection from the Table (surah 5) admonishes the unbelieving people of the book. A case in point is Christianity. According to the Qur'an, Jesus is a highly exalted prophet who was born of a virgin, performed miracles, delivered God's message, and will return at the end of time. However, the Qur'an denies the reality of the crucifixion, implying that it was either an illusion or someone else was substituted. More significantly, it denies the Trinity and the divine nature of Jesus, as seen in the following selection from the Table (surah 5), written about 629.

The primary ritual requirements of Islam are known as the Five Pillars of Islam (arkan ad-din). They are, (1) sincerely uttering the creed,

"there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger" (shahada), (2) praying five times a day facing Mecca (salat), (3) paying an alms tax for the needy (zakat), (4) fasting during the month of Ramadan (sawm), and (5) making a pilgrimage to Mecca once in one's life, if possible (hajj). Each of these has its foundation in the Qur'an. The foundation of all of four pillars is set in Qur'anic teaching, such as the following discussions of prayer, fasting, alms, and pilgrimage:

[Prayer.] Many a time have We seen you turn you face towards heaven. We will make you turn towards a qiblah that will please you. Turn your face towards the Holy Mosque; wherever you be, turn your faces towards it.

[Fasting.] Believers, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you; ... In the month of Ramadan the Koran was revealed, a book of guidance with proofs of guidance distinguishing right from wrong. Therefore whoever of you is present in that month let him fast. But he who is ill or on a journey shall fast a similar number of days later on.

[Alms.] Give generously for the cause of God and do not with your own hands cast

yourselves into destruction. Be charitable; God loves the charitable. ...

[Pilgrimage.] Make the pilgrimage and visit the Sacred House for His sake. If you cannot, send such offerings as you can afford and do not shave your heads until the offerings have reached their destination. But if any of you is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head, he must pay a ransom either by fasting or by almsgiving or by offering a sacrifice.

[surah 2:144-150, 183-187, 195-200]

Often called the sixth pillar of Muslim obligation, Jihad, or holy war, is struggling for Allah's cause. This, too, has its foundation in the Qu'ran. Islam divides the world into two abodes: the abode of submission, encompassing Muslim territories (Dar al-Islam), and the abode of struggle, encompassing non-Islamic territories (Dar al-Harb). The obligation of jihad is to extend the abode of submission through missionary activities or, when necessary, through armed force. Jihad aims at political control over societies, to govern them by the principles of Islam. In theory, forced conversion of individuals is not intended. Originally the responsibility of the Caliphs, Jihad should only

be undertaken when success is likely. Although the explicit obligation of jihad first appears in the Hadith, its foundations are laid in the Qur'an. The following selection from the Women (surah 4), written just after the unsuccessful battle of Uhud, advises Muslims who fight for Allah.

Other revelations of Muhammad during his final years presents his domestic side. At the time he had nine wives, several previously widowed, and additional slave girls. Some revelations surah advise his wives on proper conduct and discuss his relations with them. Recommendations are also made on etiquette when visiting Muhammad.

THE CALIPHATE.

Muhammad founded both a new religion and a new social order. Although he believed that his mission as a religious prophet was complete at the time of his death, plans for a larger Muslim social community (*umma*) were not as yet realized. He had planned to conquer Syria and Iraq, but died too soon. Upon his death, key political decisions were made by Muhammad's early companions (*Sahaba*), many of whom were his first converts. Their first task was to appoint a successor, or Caliph, who would fill Muhammad's political leadership role, but not his prophetic role. From the start, however, there was political dissent. To the consternation of Ali, Muhammad's cousin who expected to step into the leadership role, the early companions selected Abu Bakr as the first Caliph. For the sake of unity, Ali deferred to his rival. Plans were drawn for military expansion, but the aged Caliph died only two years into his rule.

For the next ten years, the newly appointed Caliph Umar expanded Muslim territory far into the Persian and Byzantine empires. Non-Arab converts were denied equal political rights, and it would be almost a hundred years until a unified Muslim political order would emerge. Umar was stabbed to death by a Persian slave,

and Uthman became the third Caliph. According to legend, trouble started for Uthman when he lost Muhammad's seal ring in a well. He prompted further negative reaction by favoring his family clan, the Umayyads, which originally opposed Muhammad in Mecca. A small rebellion erupted in Medina, in which a disaffected faction (which later became the Kharajites) laid siege to his house. Civil war broke later and, twelve years into his rule, Uthman was assassinated by rebel Muslim troops from Egypt. The early companions finally elected Ali as the fourth Caliph, but he was immediately opposed by Syrian governor Mu'awiyah, who sought to avenge the death of Uthman, his cousin. War broke out between Ali and Mu'awiyah and, on the eve of the decisive battle, Ali was killed by a soldier from a rebel group that had split with him as a result of disagreement with his policies. The Caliphate fell to Ali's son, Husan, but he quickly ceded it to Mu'awiyah.

Under the first wave of Muslim expansion by the first four Caliphs, all of Arabia, Persia, and North Africa were conquered. For the next ninety years the Caliphate was held by the secular Umayyad Dynasty (661-750), established by Mu'awiyah. After Mu'awiyah's death, the Caliphate was passed to his unpopular son

Yazid. In 680 an insurrection against Yazid was launched by Ali's son, Husayn. Husayn and his followers were massacred in what is now the Iraqi city of Kerbala (a tragedy which became the rallying cry of the Shi'i Muslims). Centered in Damascus, the Umayyads continued to push Muslim boundaries. Moving across north Africa and into Spain, expansion into Europe halted at the French borders in the Battle of Tours in 732. The Caliphate was next held by the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1285), centered in Baghdad, and then by the Ottoman Empire (1300-1922), centered in Istanbul. In 1924 the Caliphate was abolished by the Turkish National Assembly, inheritors of the Ottoman Empire. To justify this controversial decision the Assembly maintained that "The idea of a single caliph, exercising supreme religious authority over all the peoples of Islam, is an idea taken from fiction, not from reality."

SUNNI AND SHI'A.

Just as political factions divided early Islam, so did theological differences, the key issue being whether Ali and his successors had a special spiritual status. Islam today is divided into two main groups over this issue. The Sunni, or Sunnite, attribute no special function to Ali, whereas the Shi'a, or Shi'ite, do. Sunnis make up approximately 90% of Muslims worldwide. Their full name is *Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Hadith*, that is, followers of the path laid out by the prophet in his sayings. In addition to rejecting the special spiritual status of Ali, Sunnis recognize the first four Caliphs as political successors to Muhammad and acknowledge the political authority of the Caliphate in general. Sunnis must also follow one of the four schools of Islamic law (*madhahib*), developed in the 8th and 9th centuries.

Prior to the emergence of the four Sunni schools of law, Muslims used several guides to determine proper conduct. After the Qur'an was consulted for guidance, appeals were made to practices of about Muhammad (*sunna*) as compiled by scholars into texts called *Hadith*. When these avenues failed, decisions were made in one of three ways: analogical deductions from existing laws (*qiyas*), consensus of the Muslim

community or its leading scholars (*ijma*), and independent decisions of a single jurist (*ijtihad*).

The four schools of Islamic law not only systematized the above appeal routes, but developed their own codes of behavior from these. The methodological differences between the four schools are subtle, although their geographical domains are more distinct. The *Hanafite* school, which provides the greatest scope of reasoning, predominates in former Turkish empire areas (Turkey, Palestine, Egypt), and India. The *Malikite* school, which focuses more on the traditions of Muhammad's companions rather than Muhammad, is dominant in west Africa. The *Hanbalite* school, the most literalist in adhering to the letter of the Qur'an, is found in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Finally, the *Shafi'ite* school, which developed the standard hierarchy of appeals, is most prominent in Indonesia. It's founder, Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (767-820) was the foremost scholar of early Islamic law. He is most well known for his analysis of the "four roots of jurisprudence". That is, legal questions are resolved by appealing firstly to the Qur'an, secondly to the Sunna, thirdly to consensus, and lastly to analogical reasoning. After his death Shafi'i's disciples founded the Shafi'ite school; his

penetrating analysis of the four roots was also adopted by the other schools of Islamic Law.

Shi'a Muslims, consisting of 10% of the Muslim population, are located primarily in Iran. Shi'a origins are difficult to trace because of negative Sunni chronologies and biased reports by later Shi'as. However, with the assassination of Ali and the creation of the Umayyad Caliphate in 661, a faction loyal to the memory of Ali emerged. Devotion to Ali and his selected descendants became the test for true faith. Early Shi'as were in continual opposition to the ruling Caliph, some groups advocating armed resistance.

About forty factions of Shi'as have emerged over the years. The most numerous are the Twelvers (*Ithna 'Asha-Riyyah*), who comprise about 80% of their number. The central Twelver doctrine is that of the Imam, or leader. Twelvers believe that Muhammad's spiritual abilities (*wilaya*) were passed on to a series of Imams, beginning with Ali. Twelver theology holds that human beings require inspired leadership in order to adhere faithfully to the dictates of Islam and that successive Imams are clearly designated by predecessors (*nass*). Imams are also thought to be guided by Allah and to be infallible (*isma*). Eleven Imams have appeared so far, and they await the appearance

of the twelfth and final, named Mahdi, who is alive but hidden from view. More precisely, the Mahdi is in a state called *occultation*, in which he can see others, but others cannot see him; at age four, Allah placed him in that state for protection after the death of his father, the 11th Imam, 873 CE. It is believed that the Mahdi made four representations (*wakils*) between 873-940, a period called the *lesser occultation*. He will return at the end of time, take vengeance on unbelievers, and initiate an era of peace. Until then, leaders called the *Mujtahid* make decisions of canon law on behalf of the hidden Imam. In this century, the Ayatollahs have this function.

Two other Shi'a factions deserve mentioning. The Fivers (*Zaydis*) split from twelver tradition by recognizing Zaydis as the fifth Imam (as opposed to Muhammad al-Baqir). Concentrated in Yemen, they do not assert the necessity of Imams and accept some of the early Caliphs. The Seveners (*Isma'ili*) split from twelver tradition by recognizing Isma'il as the seventh Imam (rather than Musa-l-Kazim). They see Isma'il as the final Imam, Mahdi, who will return for the day of judgment.

The Sunnis and Shi'as also part company on the Hadith collections which they acknowledge. The Sunnis have nine collections, six of which are particularly revered. The most widely accepted

of these are referred to as the *Two Sahih* (authentic): *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. The first of these, compiled by al-Bukhari (d. 875), is the most important. A prominent teacher of *Hadith*, al-Bukhari examined 600,000 sayings, the majority being duplicate versions, and sifted them down to 7,275 authentic ones. Of these, about 2,700 are nonrepetitious. Limited by space constraints, he remarks that he left out other sayings which he believed were authentic. The sayings are topically categorized in 97 books, with some longer sayings split and categorized into two distinct topical divisions. The second most revered collection is that by Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 875), who examined 300,000 traditions and reduced them to 4,000. A student of al-Bukhari, al-Hajjaj is thought to have been more critical in deeming a saying "authentic" and, unlike his teacher, presents the longer sayings in their integrated form. The remaining four collections (or *Sunan*) were compiled by Abu Dawud (d. 886), at-Tirmidhi (d. 892), an-Nasa'i (d. 915), and Ibn Majah (d. 886). Of the six *Hadith* collections, those by al-Bukhari, Muslim al-Hajjaj and Dawud have been made available in English translation. Three Shi'a collections, called *akhbar* (as opposed to *Hadith*) are traditionally thought to originate with Ali and the Imams (Ja'far al-Sadiq in particular).

Larger than the Sunni collections, they were compiled by al-Kafi of al-Kulini (d. 939) (whose collection is the most widely respected), al-Qummi (d. 991), and al-Tusi (d. 1067).

SUFISM.

Almost as old as Islam itself, Sufism is the mystical tradition of Islam which emphasizes mystical union with God. Rabi'a al-'Adawiya (717-801) was one of the earliest and most admired sufis and is sometimes referred to as the Muslim St. Teresa. She was kidnapped as a girl, sold into slavery, and was later freed because of her piety. Thereafter she lived as an ascetic with a small group of followers. Although she did not write systematic treatises on sufism, her sayings were passed down to later generations of sufis who recorded them and used them as sounding boards for their own mystical ideas. Her key theological contribution is the notion of unconditional love of God (mahabbah), which parallels the Hindu notion of *bhakti* or Christian notion of *agape*. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was a scholar of Islamic law and philosopher who ultimately rejected academic approaches to truth in favor of immediate mystical experience. His autobiography *Deliverer from Error* describes his initial acquaintance with Sufism:

I thus comprehended their fundamental teachings on the intellectual side, and progressed, as far as is possible by study and oral instruction, in the knowledge of mysticism. It became clear to me, however,

that what is most distinctive of mysticism is something which cannot be apprehended by study, but only by immediate experience (*dhawq* -- literally "tasting"), by ecstasy and by a moral change. What a difference there is between *knowing* the definition of health and satiety, together with their causes and presuppositions, and *being* healthy and satisfied!...

The most widely acclaimed Sufi writer is Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi (1207-1273) whose six book poetic work entitled *The Masnawi* is often referred to as the Qur'an in Persian. Central to Rumi's writings are the paired notions of union and separation. That is, moments of the mystic's life consist of blissful union with God, whereas, of necessity, other moments involve separation. Separation frequently manifests itself in human pain and suffering. Rumi argues that such suffering must be understood in a larger context: the spiritual happiness we achieve in the state of union is accentuated by the suffering we experience while in separation.

* * * *

BAHA'I FAITH

The Baha'i Faith began in middle 19th century Persia, a Shi'ite Islamic society. Founded by Baha'u'llah and his forerunner the Bab, developed and guided by his son, Abdu'l-Baha, and great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi, it is now widely recognized as an independent world religion. The Baha'i Faith emphasizes the unity of all religions and world peace. "To be a Baha'i," according to Abdu'l-Baha, "simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood." Baha'i doctrine is sometimes expressed in the "three onenesses."

(1) The oneness of God: there is a single and ultimately unknowable God who is given different names. The knowledge we do have of God derives from his various prophets who instruct us. (2) The oneness of humankind: there a single human race, and we are all members of it. (3) The oneness of religion: all religions are unified insofar as they are each stages in God's revelatory plan.

THE BAB.

The Baha'i faith is historically founded on the Babi religion, which in turn rests on the Shi'ite Muslim doctrine of the Hidden Imam. According to this doctrine, the Mahdi, the final Imam—or spiritual successor to Ali—is alive, but was placed by God in a condition of occultation in which he can see others, but others cannot see him (or at least they cannot recognize him). He will return at the end of time, take vengeance on the wicked, and initiate an era of peace. Shi'ite Islam has numerous denominations and sects which have differing views of the status of the Imams in general and of the Mahdi. The 19th century Shaykhi sect, founded by Shaykh (Sheik) Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (1753-1826), maintained that Imams have an almost divine status and that each generation needs a gate (Bab) as an intermediary between the Hidden Imam and believers. Although one of the Shaykhi leaders claimed to be guided by the Mahdi in his dreams, no one initially claimed to be the Bab himself.

The forerunner to the Baha'i faith was affiliated with the Shaykhi sect -- either formally or as a sympathizer. Sayyid Ali-Muhammad Shiraz (1819-1850) was born into a merchant family in south Persia; his father died soon after his birth, and he was raised by his uncle. He married at 22

and subsequently joined the Shaykhi. In 1844, while on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he claimed to be the Bab, which was a more extreme claim than his Shaykhi predecessors made. It is this event which Baha'is designate as the beginning of their religion. Scholars believe that the Bab privately announced to his followers that he was the Mahdi himself; the public declaration of Babhood, though, was politically more safe to make. Even so, his declaration quickly attracted followers, but it also raised political concerns, and for the next 6 years -- the remainder of his life -- he was exiled or imprisoned. After his announcement, the Bab formed a religious group called the Babis. The first 18 of his followers were sent out as proselytizers. The *Qayyumu'l-Asma'*, a commentary on the Surah of Joseph in the Qur'an, was composed in 1844 and is the first book the Bab wrote after his Declaration. The first chapter was written in the presence of the his first believer, Mulla Husayn, and, according to the Bab, the whole book was written in 40 days. Baha'is consider it his first revealed text and his most important work. He declares a new day, comparing the book itself to the Qur'an, and thereby announcing a new revelation from God. The *Qayyumu'l-Asma'* continually draws on passages and themes from the Qur'an, replicating many of its laws. It is also in the

literary style of the Qur'an -- even to the point that the Bab intended it to be recited like the Qur'an. The work establishes a fundamental theme in Baha'i faith: The Bab is a continuation in the line of the prophets acknowledged by Islam, most notably Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Later the Bab publicly claimed to be the Imam Mahdi himself, and in 1848, in an important work called the *Bayan*, he declared that he was a manifestation of God, superseding Muhammad. The Bab believed that the resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell were to be understood metaphorically. In the *Bayan* he explains that the "day of resurrection" refers to the advent of a new dispensation which "resurrects" the previous one. For example, the Qur'an is resurrected in the *Bayan*, and the *Bayan* ultimately will be resurrected in the advent of "He whom God will make manifest." The *Bayan* also presents a constitution for the coming Babi state and a series of laws. In perhaps the most controversial section, it maintains that believers can take all possessions of nonbelievers. The severity of some of the Bab's laws dramatized his messianic role and rhetorically underscored his legislative authority. However, these laws were counter-balanced by others which prohibit harming or offending others, especially non-believers. In

any event, only a few of the Bab's laws were ever implemented.

Acceptance of the Bab's message was not as widespread as he had hoped. The Bab compared his situation to the initial disbelief Muhammad's contemporaries had demonstrated towards Muhammad -- just as Muhammad compared his situation to the rejected prophets from the past. And, again, like Muhammad, the Bab warned of divine punishment for disbelievers. He summoned the Shah of Persia to acknowledge his authority, and in 1848 the Babis distanced themselves from Islam. The same year about 300 Babis set off on a march which prompted armed confrontation. They defended themselves, but were quickly crushed by the Persian government. Massive persecution of Babis followed, and the Bab was executed by a firing squad in 1850. Witnesses reported that he and a follower were suspended by rope. The first volley only severed their ropes and they dropped to the ground. Seeing this as a divine sign, the commander of the regiment withdrew the troops, but a new group of soldiers was brought in, and they finished the task. The Bab's body was secretly retrieved by his followers and, after a number of years, transported to its final resting place at the Mausoleum of the Bab in Haifa, Israel. His immediate successor as Babi leader

was Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal), who resided in Baghdad. Before the Bab died, he foretold of a leader, greater than himself, who would finish his work.

In the *Bayan*, the Bab announced the coming of a future prophet -- the Sun of Truth -- or, more generally described as "He Whom God Shall Manifest." The Bab depicts him in eschatological terms and notes that his nature is reflected in the *Bayan*. Baha'is believe that the Bab is foretelling the coming of Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), the Baha'i faith's second founder. The name "Baha'u'llah" is an honorific title which means "Glory of God". Baha'u'llah, originally named Mirza Husayn-Ali Nur, was born in Tehran, the capital of Persia. He had no formal education and was eldest son of a distinguished minister of state. When 22, his father died and he was left to manage the estate and care for his family. At age 26 (1844) he espoused Babism and became one of the Bab's earliest followers, although, as some Baha'i historians maintain, he never personally met the Bab. In 1852 a Babi named Sadiq attempted to assassinate the Iranian Shah in retaliation for the execution of the Bab. Sadiq and 80 others were killed, and many more were imprisoned or exiled. Baha'u'llah's property was confiscated and he was imprisoned for four months, after

which he was exiled to Baghdad. Mirza Yahya (the Bab's provisional successor) went into hiding and made his way to Baghdad when he heard that Baha'u'llah was there. This initial period of exile lasted until 1853 and was relatively peaceful. Baha'u'llah retreated to the desert for two years (1854-1856), and when he returned he ably met challenges by the Muslim Mullahs in defense of Babism. He wrote several books while in Baghdad, the most important of these being *The Book of Certitude (Kitab-i-Iqan)*. The work explains how different periods of time had their own prophets who subtly anticipated future prophets in future dispensations. Followers of these prophets invariably misinterpreted their messages. Baha'u'llah believes that special attention to key passages in their writings and symbolic terms will show that each prophet indeed announced the coming of the next. At this stage in his writings, he does not include himself in the chain of prophets.

BAHA'U'LLAH AND ABDU'L-BAHA

In 1863 Baha'u'llah was summoned to Constantinople (Istanbul). While preparing for the journey his house overflowed with well-wishers, and for 12 days he, and later his family, were compelled to camp in a garden, later named Ridvan (paradise). At this time he privately announced that he was the leader foretold by the Bab. As such, he declared himself to be the manifestation or appearance of God. This announcement is known to Baha'is as the Declaration at Ridvan, and is the basis of their most important festival celebrated each year from April 21-May 2. Baha'u'llah, his family, and 26 followers went to Constantinople, where they were confined to squalid conditions for four months, and then they moved to Adrianople (Edirne), Turkey, where they remained until 1868. There he attracted more followers and openly announced his mission. He wrote letters to the Shah and other world leaders, including Napoleon III, Pope Pius IX, Czar Nicholas II, and Queen Victoria. In 1868, a long-standing tension between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya culminated in division, principally owing to Baha'u'llah's claim of a new dispensation and universal religion. Contrary to Baha'u'llah's wishes, their quarreling led to violence among the two factions; Mirza Yahya

was deported to Cyprus, where ultimately his followers abandoned him. Baha'u'llah was deported to Acre, Palestine (then part of Syria), which was a prison city for criminals of the Turkish Empire.

For two years he and 80 followers were confined to army barracks; the conditions were so harsh that several of the followers died. When the barracks were needed to house troops, Baha'u'llah was moved to a small house in the city in which he stayed for six years. During these years his followers grew substantially in number. At this time he wrote *The Most Holy Book (Kitab-i-Aqdas)*, his most important work, which lays out the basic laws and principles for his followers and establishes the basis of Baha'i administration. Although the Bayan also contains laws, Baha'is believe that the Bayan has been superseded by the Aqdas. Accordingly, the Aqdas follows some of the Bayan's laws and ignores others. In 1877 he was released from the prison city although the prison sentence was never removed. After a two year stay in a house north of Acre, Baha'u'llah moved to a more regal estate, known as Bahji, secured through donations from his followers. He spent the remaining years of his life writing and teaching while administrative functions were taken over by his eldest son, Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921).

Many of Baha'u'llah's writings focus on the place of the Baha'i faith in God's scheme of revelation, and also on laws which govern the Baha'i community. Some writings, though, focus on the larger issue of world peace -- a distinguishing feature of the Baha'i faith. Just as the Bab reinterpreted the traditional notion of the "Day of Judgment," so too does Baha'u'llah give a broader interpretation to the notion of "paradise" and "hell." They are partly experienced here on earth, although they are more vast in the afterlife. Upon Baha'u'llah's death in 1892 Abdu'l-Baha was appointed successor, as designated in Baha'u'llah's will. Baha'u'llah's burial site -- a garden building near the main mansion at Bahji -- is the most holy site for the Baha'i faith.

Abdu'l-Baha ("servant of Baha") was born in Tehran, and was only nine when his father was first imprisoned (1852). He was a dutiful companion to his father, attending him throughout his years of exile and closely guarding him. After Baha'u'llah's death, the transition of leadership was not smooth, particularly as Abdu'l-Baha was opposed by several family members. After Baha'u'llah's death, Abdu'l-Baha built the shrine on Mount Carmel as a burial site for the Bab. Abdu'l-Baha's dissenting relatives reported to the

Turkish government that he was constructing a fortress, and in 1901 he was confined to Acre for seven years. There he lived an austere life, teaching and visiting the sick. One of his most popular works, *Some Answered Questions* was written at this time. One of the issues he considers is that of pantheism -- the theological position that God is identical to the universe as a whole. He distinguishes between two types of pantheism: that of the Sufis and that of the prophets. The pantheism of the Sufis maintains that individual beings (people, animals) are sub-components of God's essence. This he rejects, since it implies that God becomes a lower form of existence. The pantheism of the prophets sees the world as an emanation of God, distinct from, yet illuminated by God's being. This maintains the immanence of God's attributes, while still conserving God's transcendence. Baha'u'llah endorses this view true Pantheism.

In 1907 a tribunal met to determine his fate. Coincidentally, a revolution broke out in the Ottoman Empire, and the tribunal members were called to Istanbul. The new leaders of the Empire (the Young Turks) released all political and religious prisoners in the empire. Thus, after a total of 40 years of imprisonment in Palestine, Abdu'l-Baha too was released (1908). In 1911-1913 he traveled to Great Britain,

France, Germany, Hungary, the United States, Canada, and Egypt, where he met with religious and political leaders, scientists, and philosophers. He spoke at universities, charitable organizations, and institutions of various religions. Accordingly, Abdu'l-Baha is responsible for spreading the Baha'i faith beyond the middle east and into the western world. He continued adapting the Baha'i faith to modern social ideas. In his role as a spiritual leader, he maintained exclusive authority in interpreting scripture, as appointed to him by Baha'u'llah, although he did not consider his own writings to be equally authoritative. During the years of World War I, Abdu'l-Baha and the Baha'is in Palestine were under war-time restrictions and had only limited contact with outside pilgrims. Their efforts focused on securing food supplies for the Baha'is and the surrounding poor. After the war, Palestine was occupied by the British and Abdu'l-Baha was officially honored with Knighthood. He died in 1921, stating in his will that leadership should passed to his 24 year old grandson, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), whom he appointed "Guardian of the Cause."

SHOGHI EFFENDI AND THE HOUSE OF JUSTICE.

Studying abroad at the time, Shoghi Effendi was surprised at the news of his position. The writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah reflect the fact that their initial audience was Muslim. The unity of religions, races, and God are indeed pervasive themes of their writings; however, these themes are often presented in contexts which defend the Bab's and Baha'u'llah's roles as legitimate prophets in the line of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. In Shoghi Effendi's writings, the Muslim context is less important and the themes of unity are brought to the fore on their own merits. During his tenure as leader, he established the administrative structure of the Baha'i faith and became responsible for the subsequent formalized organization of Baha'is around the world. As a visionary, many of his writings and talks map out achievement goals and multi-year plans to accomplish these. One of these involved plans to spread the Baha'i faith worldwide, including North America. His definitive English translations and clarifications of Baha'u'llah's writings helped secure the Baha'i faith in non-Islamic Western countries.

Perhaps most importantly, he arranged for the long-awaited election of members to the Universal House of Justice (Bayt al-Adl al-Azam)

which would succeed him after his death by overseeing the Baha'i community and elucidating doctrine. The plan for this task was Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament which, in turn, draws from the Aqdas. The first election of the members of the Universal House of Justice took place in 1963, six years after his death. Members reside in Haifa, Israel, meet almost daily, and are re-elected every five years. Today, the Baha'i faith has over 5 million followers in more than 230 countries worldwide, and is one of the world's fastest growing religions. It remains the largest religious minority in Iran, the cradle of the Baha'i faith, with more than a quarter million believers. However, since the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979, more than 200 Baha'is have been executed, and thousands more persecuted.

BAHA'I TEACHING.

The Baha'i faith now reflects little of its original Imami theology, although Shi'ite elements are more present in Iranian Baha'i traditions. Because of Baha'u'llah's appearance, the function of the Bab is no longer considered primary. A central tenet of Baha'i teaching holds that God's nature is unknowable. Everything around us, though, exhibits different attributes of the divine as each is created by God and endowed with different sets of attributes. Most generally, God is a single infinite power, which implies the nonexistence of evil: evil is only the absence of good, just as darkness is the absence of light. Neither darkness nor evil have a reality, but are only names we give to the absence of the reality in question. The most striking aspect of Baha'i theology is its notion of the unity of religions. Revelation is thought to be progressive, and prophets deliver messages appropriate to their own times. All true prophets from the various religions should be acknowledged as genuine—including Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muhammad, Krishna, and Buddha. The prophets are *manifestations* of God and have special insight into the spiritual realm. Baha'i revelation is seen as the fulfillment of all previous revelations.

In its eschatological teachings, the Baha'i faith holds that there is life after death through the continuation of a disembodied soul. However, heaven, hell, and final judgment are symbolic. Baha'u'llah is the messianic figure spoken of by previous prophets, and the "final judgment" is the appearance of each new manifestation/prophet of God. Institutionally, the Baha'i faith has no official priests, no monastic component, and all Baha'is are expected to participate in teaching. Local spiritual assemblies assist with life cycle rites, such as weddings and funerals, plan community events, counsel members, and coordinate Baha'i education programs. Nine Baha'is are elected annually by secret ballot (April 21) to help supervise the local assemblies. National spiritual assemblies oversee the local spiritual assemblies, and the Universal House of Justice oversees these. Baha'is follow a 19 month calendar, each month having 19 days with four intercalary days between the last two months. One month is designated for fasting.

In their social and moral beliefs, Baha'is teach racial and gender equality, monogamy, abstinence from alcohol and narcotics, and the voluntary sharing of property. Strong emphasis is placed on world peace and the unity of all humankind, as indicated in the statement by

Baha'u'llah that "You are all fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, the flowers of one garden." The Baha'i founders and the Universal House of Justice variously advocated a universal language, a universal league of nations, and an international court of arbitration. Although Baha'is believe in the doctrine of a just war, military aggression is rejected.

BAHA'I SCRIPTURES.

The most sacred group of Baha'i texts are the writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, which are considered to be revelations. Second to those are the writings of Abdu'l-Baha which, while not revealed, are considered to be inspired. The writings of Shoghi Effendi are not on a par with either of these groups, but are still considered authoritative. The letters of the Universal House of Justice are also authoritative, but are not scriptural either. The complete corpus of Baha'i scriptures is perhaps two hundred volumes, although some items are still in manuscript form. The Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Abdu'l-Baha were imprisoned and exiled for much of their lives, and, since they were prohibited from public speaking under these conditions, they devoted their time to writing.

The Bab composed about 50 volumes of writings. His most important work is the *Qayyum al-Asma'* (1844), a commentary on the Surah of Joseph in the *Qur'an*, which Baha'is consider to be the Bab's first revealed work. The foremost doctrinal works of the Bab are the Persian and Arabic *Bayan* ("exposition"). Although they share the same title, they are two independent works with some overlapping themes. The Persian *Bayan* (1848) is larger, although intentionally left incomplete, and is his principal

doctrinal work. The Arabic *Bayan* (1850) was composed during the last few months of the Bab's life.

Baha'u'llah penned over one hundred volumes of writings, including letters to world leaders, prayers, and laws. Many of these are published as compilations. His most important writings are *The Book of Certitude (Kitab-i-Iqan)*, *Most Holy Book (Kitab-i-Aqdas)*, *The Hidden Words*, *The Seven Valleys*, *Tablet of the Holy Mariner*, and *Tablet of Glad-Tidings*. Abdu'l-Baha's writings include *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, *A Traveler's Narrative*, *Memorials of the Faithful*, and *Secret of Divine Civilization*. Important talks were also published, including *Promulgation of Universal Peace* and *Some Answered Questions*. Abdu'l-Baha composed about 50 volumes of text, some of which are in the form of letters to Baha'is as well as to those outside the faith. Shoghi Effendi composed about 35 volumes of text. His key works are *The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah*, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, *The Promised Day is Come*, and *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*. His book *God Passes By* is his interpretation of Baha'i history. His writings also include letters and translations of the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Abdu'l-Baha. *The Baha'i World*, an ongoing series of volumes founded by Shoghi

Effendi (19 most recently), is a compilation of official Baha'i writings since 1925. It includes religious calendars, festival descriptions, poetry, music, administrative information, articles on theological topics, maps, bibliographies, transliterations, and definitions.